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Wiki Assignment 1

ED 7201

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Action Research:

Diane (2011) explains action research as a five stage process that focuses on problems that exists within the education system. Action research is implemented by educators as a form of self improvement in terms of teaching practices (p.171). The five stages of action research include determining a problem, collecting information, analyzing and measuring the data, concluding a result and creating a plan of action (p.172). Action research enables researchers to raise awareness and act upon the problems that affect student’s education.

Defining the problem: Why are students in NYC not reading on grade level?

A research topic that exists within the educational system is the fact that a large number of our nation’s students are not reading on grade level. Students are not reading on grade level because there is not enough emphasis on reading comprehension and phonetics within the classroom (Brenda et al., 2009, p. 191). When phonetics and vocabulary are taught, these skills are not used in readings to comprehend the text. Student may be able to understand the vocabulary and are capable of reading the word but this does mean that the student understands what is being read. Students become frustrated when they are not taught how to apply their decoding skills with the text that is being read (Cooper, n.d.).

Prior Research:

Elementary students in NYC are required to take state exams such as the English Language Arts Test. This exam is used to determine a student’s reading proficiency based on a series of reading passages and questions. All state exams are scored on a four point system. Based on the English Language Arts Chart, if students receive a score of 3 or 4, they are considered to have met the reading standard and grade level. If students receive a score of 1 or 2, they are below reading level and do not meet the state standards (New York City Department of Education, 2011).

The Alliance of Excellent Education (2006) shows factual data that eight million students in the nation read below grade level. These students are able to decode texts but are unable to comprehend what they read. This fact sheet shows statistics of students in grades 4-12 that read below grade level.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2009) displays achievement scores based on reading proficiency. In 2009, 46% of large city public school in the fourth grade read below reading level. Compared to the Nation’s public school, 34% of fourth graders are below reading level.

Current Instructional Strategies:

The instructional strategy currently used in the classroom is read aloud. Read aloud increases a student’s ability to comprehend the text, build on vocabulary and to become familiar with sound (Cummins & Stellmeyer-Gerade, 2011, p.400). However, as Brenda et al. (2009) has mentioned, students whom are below reading level, struggle with reading due to basic skills such as phonetics and phonemes (p.171). Although read aloud is important, students should also learn the basic phonetic skills to read independently. Instead of becoming familiar with the sound of a letter, being able to phonetically read and comprehend the alphabetic letter is also important.

Pros of current instructional strategy (read a loud):

* Increases comprehension of text, build vocabulary and familiarity with sound (Cummins, S. & Stellmeyer-Gerade, C. 2011).
* Provide students with reading fluency (Kruse, M. (2007).

Cons of current instructional strategy (read a loud):

* Does not teach reading strategies and skills: Phonetics and decoding (Brenda, B., Buck, K., & Giles, R. 2009).
* Prevents beginning readers from reading independently (Kruse, M. 2007).

Independent Variable: (What is the proposed intervention?)

In 2009, Brenda, Buck and Giles conducted research based on teaching first graders literacy skills, such as phonetics and decoding texts versus read aloud. Below average students benefitted from learning phonetics and decoding texts. Their reading comprehension increased greatly as opposed to average readers. Average and advanced readers benefit from the creative challenge seen in read aloud (p. 191). Therefore, my proposed intervention is to incorporate reading strategies and skills that students would need to comprehend their reading through guided reading programs in school.

If students are not taught the strategies and skills necessary to learn how to read then they will not be able to read at grade level. Throughout a student’s academic education it is important to teach strategical skills in how to apply phonetics into comprehension of text. Some students can understand how to decode words and texts but are not able to apply these skills into reading (Cooper, n.d). Therefore, it is highly valuable for teachers to model, teach and practice basal reading skills and application into various types of readings. My intervention would include guided reading programs that are offered to students early in the morning and after school. Even with a focus on reading during classroom activities, many students below the reading level require additional time and guidance to develop basic reading skills that are necessary to read at grade level. Providing students with opportunity for additional reading help in the morning and afterschool enables students to increase their reading skills. Santa and Hoien (1999) noticed the main difference between struggling readers and average readers are the rate and process of comprehending instructional phonetics. Offering reading programs will enable students to gain skills in word recognition, reading texts and writing (p.54). However, improvement in reading level varies depending on the time of day. There would be three focus groups in this intervention. The first group consists of fourth grade students attending guided reading in the morning before class begins. The second group consists of fourth grade students attending guided reading after school and the third group of fourth grade students will not receive additional help through reading programs.

Dependent Variable: (How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention?) similar to experiment and assessment.

* For students that are reading below grade level it is best to in small guided reading group. This enables the teacher to scaffold each group’s reading skills and to determine what further skills need to practiced. During each guided reading conference the teacher will monitor students to determine a student’s reading progress. The teacher can monitor and measure a student’s growth by keeping a journal of each student.
* In order to measure the success of reading comprehension and fluency, students will be assessed based on their reading skills by using a running record. Teacher will hold individual reading conferences to log in students academic growth.

Ross (2004) conducts a research to prove that running records are effective in improving a student’s reading. Teachers are able to assess a student’s fluency in reading and reading comprehension. The running record will determine areas of improvement for each student as well as their strengths (p.187). Students in treated schools that used running records outperformed those students in near treated schools by 12% (p.186).

Practitioners/ Theorists:

Caldenhead (1987) explains that the idea of grading a student’s ability to read originated from William McGuffy’s practice that different age groups need different reading materials. Their reading comprehension is based on the difficulty of the text. However, measuring reading levels stemmed from Francis Galton’s theory of mental measurement. Social and psychological development arises from knowledge. Complexities such as mental thinking can be measured. James Cattell believed that anything complex can be measured and reduced to a simplistic version. Mental measuring was introduced to public schools in 1922. Lewis Terman was the first person to suggest that all students should be given an intelligence test (p. 436).

Since a person’s mind can be measured based on retention and comprehension of various educational knowledge, reading levels and text gradients were discovered. Fountas and Pinnell uses small group guided reading practices to develop comprehension skills based on a student’s reading level. It was from this practice that Fountas and Pinnell’s found a need of using A-Z text gradients (Thomas, n.d.).

Guided reading is when teachers provide structure, instruction and purpose to reading by responding to literature. The practice of guided reading was implemented in the 1900’s and from there changed over time. In 1946, Emmitt Betts determined that students need directions and instructions on learning how to read. Although Betts implemented this idea through a directed reading activity, it was none the less the beginning of the formation of guided reading. In a directed reading activity students read literature silently and independently to apply what they know to comprehension (Ford & Opitz, 2011, p. 226). About 10 years later, Lillian Gray and Dora Reese changed Betts guided reading to include strategic lessons and questioning to motivate reading comprehension (Ford & Opitz, 2011, p. 227).

Pros of guided reading:

* Students become independent readers (Ford & Opitz, 2011, p.233)
* Increase reading comprehension, accuracy, fluency and vocabulary (Ford & Opitz, 2011, p.234)
* Build comprehension strategies (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 293)

Cons of guided reading:

* The strategies taught in guided reading are redundant and can be seen in other lessons throughout the day. For example, one teacher states that she conducts reading pairs, leading questions, completes K-W-L chart, word study, and a mini lessons consisting of: fluency, comprehension and reading strategies (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 298).
* Reading skills and strategies are taught as part of a lesson within the curriculum (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 299)

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